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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 27 April 1993, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. WARD (Canada)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Ms. MAKINDA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the situation of African children, which had deteriorated since the previous year, was further exacerbated by the increased number of emergency situations and the negative impact of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic, in addition to a lack of resources and the heavy debt burden. Her delegation welcomed and commended the 35 per cent increase in UNICEF expenditure on programme delivery in Africa in 1992 and the Fund's intention to strengthen and open new field offices.

2. The International Conference on Assistance to African Children sponsored by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Dakar in November 1992 as a follow-up to the World Summit for Children had demonstrated the commitment of African Governments to resolving the problems facing children on the continent.

3. She reiterated her delegation's support for the "Consensus of Dakar", in particular the proposal on debt conversion to raise resources to finance children's programmes, and urged UNICEF to appeal to the donor community to lend its support to African countries in that endeavour.

4. Her country's national programme of action (NPA) which was currently in the final stages of preparation, was essentially community-focused and was aimed, in the long run, at empowering households, particularly women, and communities in general to sustain their own development programmes. She expressed here delegation's gratitude for the assistance rendered by UNICEF throughout the preparation of her country's NPA.

5. Pursuant to the Consensus of Dakar of November 1992, her Government had, in its policy framework paper, which addressed policy issues in social sectors alongside macroeconomic policies during the period 1992/1993 to 1994/1995, emphasized increased allocations, cost-sharing and improved utilization of resources for the social sectors. The Government had set a target of 40 per cent of discretionary budget expenditure for the social services by the year 1995.

6. Her country had, with the cooperation of UNICEF, started negotiations with a view to converting its private commercial debt into additional resources needed to finance NPA programmes and it called upon the donor community to support that endeavour.

7. She commended UNICEF for its prompt provision of assistance in both "loud" and "silent" emergency situations and agreed with the linkage of emergency response to the long-term development strategy. She hoped that, with the establishment of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and in cooperation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, emergency situations would be dealt with without any adverse impact on resources earmarked for programme delivery, long-term sustainability and capacity-building.

(Ms. Makinda, United Republic of Tanzania)

8. Her delegation agreed with the emphasis in the multi-donor evaluation report on the need for continued decentralization of UNICEF operations in order to help to Fund to carry out its mandate of ensuring child survival, protection and development more efficiently. It also supported the evaluation's recommendations relating to a community-based strategy, capacity-building and empowerment, especially of women as important elements of ensuring sustainability. It welcomed the Executive Director's response to the evaluation, especially his recommendation that UNICEF should continue to operate above politics in order to remain an effective partner of recipient countries.

9. Her delegation was pleased to note that the revised budget for the biennium 1992-1993 and the proposed budget for the biennium 1994-1995, had been prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the reference group on the structure and format of budget documents. It would make specific comments in that connection during the discussion in the Committee on Administration and Finance.

10. Mrs. SINGIRANKABO (Observer for Burundi) said that the international community had every right to be proud of its awareness of and focus on children's problems. The follow-up to the World Summit for Children and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was very encouraging. The alacrity with which Governments had ratified the Convention and the establishment of national programmes of action (NPAs) were proof of the determination of many adults to make the world more propitious for the full development of children. The second stage was to implement the commitments which had been undertaken, in the harsh national and international economic environment.

11. The Executive Director of UNICEF indicated in his report that the objectives set in national programmes of action (NPAs) called for more funds than were generally earmarked for the needs of children. UNICEF believed that, if developing countries could devote 20 per cent of their budgets to the social sectors and if the donors could restructure their official development assistance in order to set aside 20 per cent of their budgets for priority human requirements, then the target of $25 billion could be reached. That was feasible if the developed and developing countries fulfilled the commitment made at Dakar during the International Conference on Assistance to African children. Her delegation hoped that efforts would be made to provide the very minimum to children, who represented the future of the world.

12. Burundi, which had been one of the first signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, was committed to establishing a national programme of action for the survival, protection and development of children. That bore witness to its determination to meet the great challenges facing its children, primarily in the areas of health and education.

13. Burundi's objectives for the year 2000 were to reduce infant and maternal mortality, eradicate severe malnutrition and provide access to health care facilities, drinking water and universal basic education. Those objectives were both ambitious and attainable. Burundi was determined to mobilize the funds necessary for programme implementation by using its own resources, borrowing and resorting to international assistance.

(Mrs. Singirankabo, Observer, Burundi)

14. In that regard, her delegation hoped that the programme of cooperation between Burundi and UNICEF would be supported by the Executive Board. The aim of the programme was to support Burundi's efforts in the implementation of its national programme of action, which had set intermediate objectives for the five-year period 1993-1997, a period corresponding to the duration of Burundi's five-year economic and social development plan.

15. Mr. CASSON (Australia) said that the most important work of the current session flowed from General Assembly resolution 47/199, the major thrust of which was to improve the effectiveness of agencies in the field. In that connection, Australia welcomed the Executive Director's initiative with regard to a survey of all UNICEF field representatives to ascertain the current level of their participation in inter-agency work at the field level, and it looked forward to practical recommendations to strengthen field cooperation.

16. Australia, which regarded evaluation as central to the future development of UNICEF programmes, had been pleased to participate in a wide-ranging multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF programmes and of their effectiveness in meeting the needs of developing countries. The comments made by several developing countries in that regard would be useful for future evaluations, in which some of their representatives would participate. His delegation commended the evaluation to the Board and looked forward to working with other members to ensure that the issues identified were put to good use in strengthening UNICEF. As a direct follow-up to resolution 47/199, his delegation intended to introduce in the Programme Committee a resolution which would call on UNICEF to provide summaries of the impact of its programmes and projects. Such a reporting system would not only make UNICEF more effective, but would also improve the transparency of its programmes.

17. The increase in the income of UNICEF to $938 million in 1992 was testimony to the high regard in which Governments and private-sector donors held its work. The world was witnessing a distressing increase in the number of "loud" emergencies which, according to the Executive Director, had tended to divert attention and resources away from "silent" emergencies. His delegation agreed with those delegations which had indicated that the supplementary budget should be the main source of funding for "loud" emergencies but also hoped that, as such emergencies decreased, the funds thus saved could be made available to the general resources of UNICEF. In that regard, UNICEF should work more closely with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure an ongoing constructive dialogue which would facilitate a more effective division of labour and sharing of responsibilities.

18. The references to family planning already made at the current session highlighted the need to provide international assistance for national efforts to stem the high birth rates which affected development. At the previous session, it had been noted that child survival initiatives were being threatened by the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS. Australia commended the work of UNICEF in that field and requested the Executive Director, in conjunction with the World Health Organization's global programme on AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to make further progress in collaborative programming.

(Mr. Casson, Australia)

19. On the issue of headquarters accommodation, his delegation would support taking advantage of the New Rochelle offer, which would lead to a saving of $290 million. While it preferred a total move, Australia could accept the option of a partial move involving the retention of some premises in Manhattan.

20. Mr. DE LA CHEVALERIE (France) said that the impetus provided by the World Summit for Children should be sustained. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had already been ratified by 130 countries, gave UNICEF an important role to play in following up the implementation of the Convention, by assisting States parties to the Convention which wished to provide themselves with the necessary legal machinery for its implementation.

21. With regard to emergency operations, he noted that the growing number of crises, conflicts and natural disasters had made it necessary for UNICEF to be increasingly active. France, which was naturally responsive to those tragic situations, ranked second in terms of financial commitments to Yugoslavia. However, the highly publicized emergency operations must not make the world forget the thousands of children who died daily and who were equally entitled to attention from UNICEF. His delegation therefore felt that, without overlooking the compelling obligations inherent in crisis situations, UNICEF should consider increasing the resources made available for emergency operations and commit them on a case-by-case basis, giving priority to those which were directly linked to development. In that regard, UNICEF should endeavour to coordinate its emergency operations with the newly created Department for Humanitarian Affairs.

22. Priority assistance to Africa must be strengthened, in view of the increase in emergency situations in that continent. The volume of UNICEF expenditure on Africa had increased and his delegation was particularly concerned to ensure that that effort was maintained.

23. France strongly supported the innovative approach of the Bamako Initiative, which aimed to involve local communities in basic health and sanitation projects. The Initiative should be supplemented by arrangements to finance health services at the intermediate level. In that context, three priorities had been selected by the French Ministry for Cooperation: funding for health services, control of communicable diseases, and programmes to promote maternal and child health. Those concerns had been addressed at the World Summit for Children and France had mobilized funding of 300 million francs for such programmes in 1992.

24. His delegation attached great importance to the education of mothers and girls since it was through women that the main progress could be achieved in developing countries particularly in the area of population. The International Centre for Children was ready to participate with UNICEF in activities which would promote the integration of women in development and the education of girls. UNICEF should therefore take that dimension specifically into account in the programmes it undertook.

25. With regard to children orphaned by AIDS and street children, he noted that it was clearly within the Fund's mandate to do everything possible to limit the number of such children and to ease their suffering. UNICEF must also make Governments aware of the problems of children orphaned by AIDS so as to

(Mr. de la Chevalerie, France)

facilitate their integration and to ensure that they, in turn, did not become carriers of the disease.

26. With regard to multi-donor evaluation, his delegation associated itself with its conclusions, in particular those relating to the strengthening of national institutions, which should make it possible to continue social and health programmes. Strategies must be modified to provide for more structured programmes within the national context. More emphasis should be placed on training activities adapted to the existing capacities of the countries involved, priority being given to the target groups, namely women.

27. Finally, he commended the outstanding work done by the National Committees. The intensive advocacy campaign carried out by the French National Committee had made it possible to increase the funds raised by 15 per cent, despite an unfavourable economic climate.

28. Mr. VACEK (Czech Republic) said that the activities of the national committee of Czechoslovakia had been affected by the splitting up of the country early in 1993 and the committee had lost its legal basis for existence after 1 January 1993. The process of establishing a new Czech National Committee was a painful one and the assistance of the UNICEF office in Geneva would be needed.

29. Despite the problems, both the former Czechoslovakia and the new Czech Republic had continued to provide support to children in the Chernobyl area and to refugees from many areas affected by civil strife. The National Committee, as well as many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and churches had also been involved in organizing humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia.

30. Turning to Central and Eastern Europe and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union, he noted that any further deepening of economic and political instability in the region would greatly affect peace and economic and human progress in many parts of the world. UNICEF should therefore seek to respond promptly to the rapidly evolving events and the emerging needs of the region.

31. During 1992, UNICEF had devoted more than 20 per cent of its total budget to emergency relief operations and seven of its staff members had been killed in service. Urgent steps should therefore be taken both to increase the capacity of UNICEF to cope with the continuously growing needs and to improve security for its staff.

32. With regard to organizational matters, his Government had noted the results of the multi-donor evaluation. It supported the Executive Director's proposal for a review of administrative and management structures at UNICEF headquarters, but believed that a decision should be made at the current session of the Board.

33. On the question of headquarters accommodation, his Government recognized that the issue was a sensitive one, but it was nevertheless inclined to support the Manhattan option.

(Mr. Vacek, Czech Republic)

34. Finally, he wished to acknowledge the role of UNICEF in general, and of its Executive Director in particular, in the reform of the United Nations development system and in responding to General Assembly resolution 47/199.

35. Mr. ASAADI (Yemen) said that his country's participation in the 1993 regular session of the Executive Board coincided to the day with a most important event, namely the holding of free and fair elections in which all political forces in Yemen were competing on an equal footing. Polling stations had closed only a few hours earlier, and Yemenis everywhere were tensely awaiting the outcome of the first election to take place on the basis of genuine democratic principles with mixed emotions of apprehension and joy. The great event had come to dominate the emotional lives of Yemenis, and other issues, despite their gravity, had come to seem of diminished importance.

36. At its 1992 session, the Executive Board had been apprised of a number of disaster situations that Yemen was facing at that time. There had been others since then, most recently the flooding that had caused large-scale human and material losses. The humanitarian role played by UNICEF, a number of friendly countries and a number of international organizations in mitigating the impact of those disasters had been highly commendable. The Yemenis had borne their tribulations with admirable patience and had coped with the physical and psychological effects with an indescribable degree of fortitude because of their deep feeling that support for the national unity they had achieved in May 1990 and for democracy could alone ensure a better future.

37. Since it had been the genuine desire to establish a unified democratic society that had enabled the Yemenis to support their suffering, the international community was urged to assist them by all possible means. National unity and democracy were the true weapons of resistance to injustice and divisiveness and for the elimination of poverty, suffering and fear, which were part and parcel of the mission of UNICEF. Yemen had confidence in the renewed ability of the Fund to fulfil its great humanitarian mission, testimony to which was to be found most recently in the dedication of members of its staff in giving their lives for its sake.

38. The country programme for Yemen for the period 1994 to 1998, which would be considered by the Board at its current session, was a true reflection of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of the national population strategy for the 1990s and of the Pan-Arab Plan for child welfare and development adopted at Tunis in November 1992. It constituted the minimum amount of support necessary for the protection, survival and development of Yemeni children in the difficult circumstances they were enduring, and his delegation hoped that the programme would receive the full support of the members of the Board.

39. While Yemen was anxious to mobilize support for its own children, it also urged the international community to assume the humanitarian role required of it in all regions where children found themselves in cruel and difficult circumstances, including Palestine, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

40. Mr. EGGERT (Observer for Finland) said that the revised structures for the governance and financing of United Nations programmes and funds could help to clarify the roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system in the formulation and implementation of development policies. The transformation of the current governing bodies into smaller executive boards was an essential element in the reform process. The text on which agreement had been reached provided a good framework for implementing real changes and Finland stood ready to participate in any further discussions. In the reform process, UNICEF should ensure that it maintained the support of its National Committees, whose financial and moral support were vitally important. The proposal by the Secretary-General of an agenda for development provided a good basis for more profound changes in the system from the point of view of economic and social development and human rights. Finland had also noted with satisfaction the active role played by UNICEF in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which provided a basis for improving the delivery side of the Organization's development activities.

41. Turning to the results of the multi-donor evaluation, he noted that the two-year process had produced a comprehensive appraisal of the performance of UNICEF, as well as recommendations for future improvements. Finland supported the recommendation that UNICEF should review its policies and strategies for ultimately choosing a balanced mixture of the approaches of capacity-building and empowerment, while taking into account the element of the delivery of supplies and services. Capacity-building and empowerment were crucial to enhancing the ability of UNICEF to promote sustainable development. In addition, a schedule should be elaborated for the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation in a clear order of priority and the UNICEF guidelines for the preparation of country programmes should be updated.

42. One of the first critical choices would be to determine the involvement of UNICEF in emergency operations. UNICEF was a development agency whose primary responsibility should be to support long-term development activities. It should therefore limit its involvement in emergency operations in order to ensure the availability of resources for regular development cooperation activities. In that connection, it should also participate fully in the integrated humanitarian assistance system coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which should be further consolidated in order to enhance the effectiveness of relief operations.

43. Finland supported the evaluation's recommendation that UNICEF should more actively support democracy and human rights, which were prerequisites for popular participation and the empowerment of the people. With regard to reproductive rights, for example, the obvious priority should be to give direct support to access to contraceptives for the 300 million women or couples in the developing countries who were interested in using contraceptives. Action in that field was important since population growth was closely linked to poverty and environmental degradation and thus could not be acted upon in isolation. UNICEF should therefore work in close cooperation with UNFPA.

(Mr. Eggert, Observer, Finland)

44. Finally, he noted that there was still room for further consolidation of the UNICEF budget and endorsed the proposal that the administrative and programme support budget and the global funds budget should be merged into a single budget because of the need for a clear and comprehensive picture of the personnel data currently presented under various budget headings.

45. Mr. GERVAIS (Observer for Côte d'Ivoire) said that, by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signing the World Summit Declaration, his country had demonstrated its desire to promote the advancement of women and children as a priority objective within the framework of its economic and social development policy. It had further spelt out those objectives in the programme of action presented at the International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC) and had proposed a strategy for achieving them that took account of its limited financial resources.

46. Mainly as a result of the economic crisis which Côte d'Ivoire faced, the situation of its children had generally deteriorated over the past 30 years. The challenge to UNICEF and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire was therefore to consolidate such gains as had been made. Despite the difficult circumstances, projects in the health, water supply, sanitation, education, and social mobilization sectors, inter alia, had yielded encouraging results. Unfortunately, while such projects were part of the Government's plan to develop the country's human resources, political will was no substitute for financial resources.

47. In his opening statement, the Executive Director had acknowledged the special problems faced by the countries of sub-Saharan Africa which hampered the implementation of their national programmes of action. Côte d'Ivoire, for example, had since 1986 suffered a 70 per cent decline in its export earnings because of depressed market conditions, and servicing of the national debt required 40 per cent of those earnings. Moreover, the scaling down of social sector programmes which benefited from UNICEF cooperation indicated that supplementary funding for projects had not yet been made available and that the initial resources allocated had been inadequate. Indeed, the methodology used for determining general resource allocations placed middle-income countries like Côte d'Ivoire at a disadvantage, since it took no account of the debt factor. Other factors, such as per capita debt, should therefore be taken into account in determining allocations so that heavily indebted countries, particularly those in Africa, which in 1991 had spent more than $26 billion on debt servicing to the detriment of social sector programmes, could pursue the implementation of the objectives of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

48. The problem was not an insoluble one. Export prices needed to be stabilized over the long term and the whole question of African indebtedness should be re-examined in light of current international socio-economic realities. He hoped that Africa would not be removed from the agenda of a rapidly evolving world and that UNICEF would continue to provide its traditional assistance in the related areas of social services, capacity-building and empowerment. Moreover, to sacrifice social services in order to promote capacity-building and empowerment, as some speakers had suggested, would be to jeopardize the progress which UNICEF had thus far achieved.

(Mr. Gervais, Observer, Côte d'Ivoire)

49. His Government welcomed the initiative taken by the Government of Japan, in collaboration with the United Nations, to convene a world coalition for Africa which would study ways of giving greater impetus to social and economic progress in that continent. The wrenching changes currently taking place in the world on the eve of the twenty-first century required all countries, rich and poor alike, to demonstrate even greater solidarity with each other than in the past.

50. Mr. OULD MOHAMED MAHMOUD (Observer for Mauritania) said that the Board was meeting at a time when women and children continued to be the innocent victims of various crises throughout the world, including wars and natural disasters. On the positive side, more than 127 countries had ratified or signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and more than 78 others had implemented one of the principal recommendations of the World Summit by elaborating their national programmes of action. Those statistics proved that there was a growing commitment on the part of States to the problems of children.

51. In Africa, the firm resolve of Governments to achieve the objectives set forth at the World Summit for Children had been demonstrated by the commitment undertaken at the recent International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC) to place greater emphasis in their budgets on programmes of benefit to children and on the achievement of medium-term objectives. Those encouraging signs should not, however, mask the difficulties that still faced many of the world's children. The situation was particularly critical in those regions of Africa affected by natural disasters and latent conflicts, and especially by the impact of structural adjustment policies and the foreign debt crisis.

52. For its part, his Government had in 1992 elaborated a national programme of action aimed at stimulating investment in the social sectors and ensuring that at least 80 per cent of children attended school by 1996. In keeping with the Bamako Initiative, it also sought to provide adequate health care for more than 70 per cent of the population by 1996. Indeed, it was generally acknowledged that Mauritania's recently adopted policy aimed at providing essential medicines was one of the most successful in Africa and the Maghreb. With regard to vaccinations, the Government hoped that general mobilization of the population through media campaigns and UNICEF assistance would make it possible to achieve an 80 per cent rate of coverage in the near future.

53. Despite the prolonged drought and economic constraints which affected the country, Mauritania had sought to mobilize both domestic and external resources in pursuit of the objectives set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified, and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit, which it fully endorsed. It hoped that its sacrifices and determination would have a positive effect on donors, without whose assistance many hopes would be dashed.

54. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that his delegation fully agreed that the mid-decade review of progress in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children should be carried out during the upcoming World Summit for Social Development. Nepal also supported the recommendation by the Executive Director that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children should be coordinated with the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and that there should be an increase in funding for the social priority sectors in order to achieve the "20/20 vision" target by 1995. It was a matter of concern that the national goals set by many countries for clean water supply and sanitation by the year 2000 fell far below the intended goals of the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. The Executive Director should review national plans of action in that area and submit a report identifying limitations and suggesting stepped-up action for achieving those goals.

55. Nepal agreed with the recommendations of the Executive Director on primary environmental care and strongly urged the Board to approve his proposal on the Global Environment Facility. It also supported the Fund's involvement in family planning and felt that further areas for cooperation with UNFPA, WHO and non-governmental organizations in that field should be identified. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that UNICEF played a supporting, not a leading role, in family planning.

56. His delegation commended UNICEF for keeping pace with the changes brought about under General Assembly resolution 47/199 and for playing an active role in such important areas as country strategy notes, common premises and decentralization. There was an urgent need to revise the Fund's urban policy since more and more people would be concentrated in urban areas of developing countries.

57. In view of the dramatic increase in the Fund's emergency operations in recent years, the policy with regard to its involvement in such operations should be reformulated. Nepal agreed that there must be a balance between emergency support and long-term sustainable action and that UNICEF must continue to respond to the needs of children in both "silent" and "loud" emergencies. Since the two were inseparably linked, the source of financing for emergency operations should come from supplementary funds, and the emergency programme fund should be used for rapid response. In view of its active leadership in complex emergency situations, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was better able to play the global coordinating role in that area and should utilize the experience of UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organizations in emergency field operations. As the main coordinator, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should assign the role of lead agency to an agency in the field that was best suited to do the job at the time.

58. The time had come to review the Fund's performance and its operating mechanism in order to maintain its standards. The question of UNICEF headquarters office accommodation had been discussed by the Board for the past three years. While there was considerable merit in a cost-effective proposal, it was equally essential to evaluate the efficiency of UNICEF operations, particularly in view of the considerable restructuring in the economic and social sectors. Proper consideration should also be given to the situation of

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

delegations from the developing and the least developed countries, whose resources were limited.

59. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation to all donors and agencies for the generous assistance provided to his country. Although there was still an unfunded balance of almost 90 per cent of the supplementary funds approved by UNICEF for Nepal in the areas of education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, he was confident that donors would respond to those needs in the future.

60. Mr. VAN DUNEM "MBINDA" (Angola) said that, in addition to the vast problems which generally affected all developing countries, Angola had to deal with a new outbreak of war that had shattered all prospects for improving living conditions in the short and medium term and had a very serious impact on the country's more vulnerable population groups, particularly women and children. In those circumstances, there had been a deterioration in the social and economic conditions of the Angolan people, which was reflected in increased levels of poverty, hunger, disease, infant and maternal mortality, criminality and general lack of security. There was a high rate of malnutrition, and massive population dislocation severely affected 15 per cent of the population. More than 500,000 children had died as a result of the war.

61. The major concern of the Angolan Government was to ensure the safety of the people and mobilize the necessary resources to cope with the critical emergency situation. The war continued to result in the destruction and abandonment of the property of defenceless civilians and consequent overcrowding in safer, urban centres.

62. The situation had made it impossible to prepare and implement a national development plan and had prevented Angola from drawing up a national programme of action to implement the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The war unleashed by the Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA) in September 1992 had destroyed more of the human and material infrastructure in six months than the liberation war against Portuguese colonialism had in 16 years.

63. Since Africa was the poorest region in the world and had the greatest number of hotbeds of tension, the international community must mobilize resources to help the most severely affected African countries to alleviate their problems. The richer countries, particularly the major donors, played an important role in providing assistance for that purpose, which must be based on mutually advantageous cooperation aimed essentially at promoting development.

64. While emergency humanitarian aid was absolutely indispensable to countries in real need, it could not provide a lasting solution to the overall problems affecting developing countries. In that connection, he expressed his country's gratitude to UNICEF and to all donors which had contributed humanitarian aid to alleviate the difficulties confronting the Angolan population as a result not only of the war, but also of drought.

(Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda", Angola)

65. The resumption of the war in Angola and the resulting destruction of much of its infrastructure had prevented the implementation of any programmes to improve living conditions, especially for children. His Government had done everything to maintain a flexible position in the peace negotiations under way in order to achieve a lasting settlement, and it required the support of the international community to attain that objective. The current UNICEF programme would help to meet the needs and contribute significantly towards alleviating the problems affecting the population, However, the country programme recommendation for Angola, adopted in 1991, no longer reflected the real situation in the country resulting from the renewed warfare; it should therefore be revised in order to take account of current circumstances. In that connection, he commended UNICEF, the World Food Programme and all organizations that had provided assistance to solve the acute problems facing the Angolan people. The recent UNICEF 90-day plan of action for humanitarian assistance to Angola was a further positive step in that direction.

66. Lastly, in determining the future orientation of the Fund's work, discussion should focus on defining a child-care strategy in particularly difficult situations and establishing priorities in that area through specific actions, increasing support to countries with high maternal and child mortality rates, and giving greater support to basic education to reduce illiteracy rates and improve living conditions.

67. Mr. SIMAO (Mozambique) said that his country was emerging from 15 years of war that had resulted in more than a million deaths and widespread destitution. The most disadvantaged segments of society, particularly women and children, had been the most severely affected. At the present time, close to 3 million children were considered at high risk owing to the combined effects of war and hunger. In addition to exceptionally high morbidity and mortality rates among children, Mozambique had to cope with large-scale poverty and lack of food security and basic services. Long-term changes were necessary in order to rehabilitate and expand health care services and improve living standards.

68. His Government remained committed to meeting the needs of the country's children and had already ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Mozambique's national programme of action for children was an important policy instrument in that regard and its implementation was a major step towards fulfilling the commitments undertaken under the Convention. His Government was ready to cooperate fully with non-governmental organizations and bilateral and multilateral agencies in that effort.

69. UNICEF should be commended for its tireless work since the World Summit for Children and should be properly equipped to work with the Governments of recipient countries to achieve tangible results. The International Conference on Assistance to African Children had been a timely initiative aimed at promoting dialogue and support for the implementation of the goals agreed upon at the World Summit. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Consensus of Dakar and called upon all partners to undertake speedy action.

(Mr. Simao, Mozambique)

70. In view of the recent changes that had occurred in the world, the Board must be responsive to the needs, policies and aspirations of recipient countries in the post-cold war period. Innovation and reform were not ends in themselves. While revitalization was necessary, the many positive features of UNICEF should be maintained and strengthened. His delegation fully shared the views expressed by the Executive Director concerning the location of UNICEF headquarters. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to Mozambique's cooperation partners for the assistance provided to the country's children and mothers.

71. Mr. ALI (Observer for Iraq) said that no one could dispute or overlook the humanitarian work undertaken by UNICEF in all parts of the world both in normal circumstances and in disaster situations of various kinds. The humanitarian character of the Fund's work brought it the respect and esteem not only of States and Governments but also of peoples. Iraq's association with UNICEF had been marked by positive attitudes and fruitful cooperation over a long period of time, and it had acquired increased importance during the past three years given the circumstances that were known to all. Cooperation between Iraq and UNICEF had culminated in the visit of the Executive Director to Iraq in October 1992 during which he had met with officials of the Iraqi Government at the highest level.

72. The current situation of children in Iraq could only be described as tragic. The prevalent malnutrition, the severe shortage of medicines and vaccines, inadequate sanitation, the spread of childhood diseases and the breakdown of health services were the direct results of the maintenance of the embargo imposed on Iraq at the behest of certain States possessing influence in the Security Council. At one time or another, the embargo had even extended to children's toys. While his delegation did not wish to introduce politics into the deliberations of a body whose work was of a purely humanitarian character, the facts that had led to the deterioration in the health situation of children in Iraq had to be mentioned. The maintenance of the embargo could only represent an act of discrimination against the children of Iraq and could only jeopardize their human rights, the very rights enjoyed by children the world over. Statistics provided by the Iraqi Ministry of Health indicated that 83,087 Iraqi children under the age of five and 150,711 Iraqis, many of them children over the age of five, had died between August 1990 and January 1993. There had been a tragic and alarming rise in infant mortality, and while Iraq had once been classified as a country with a middle under-five mortality rate, it was classified in The State of the World's Children 1993 among those with a very high under-five mortality rate.

73. Although Iraq's children were being subjected to manifest injustice, his delegation was pleased to inform the Board that the Iraqi National Assembly was currently considering the question of acceding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signing the World Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Children.

74. The country programme on which agreement had recently been reached between the Government of Iraq and UNICEF (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.15) provided a reasonably good picture of the situation of children in Iraq. The Board was urged to approve the programme and to ensure that the recommendations it contained were implemented by UNICEF in an even-handed manner in all parts of Iraq for the

(Mr. Ali, Observer, Iraq)

benefit of all children, without discriminating between one region and another. Iraq looked forward to greater and more active cooperation between its Government and UNICEF in the light of its complete faith in the humanitarian character of the Fund's work.

75. Mrs. ESCALER (Observer for the Philippines) said that the meeting of the Executive Board was taking place at a time of unspeakable violence and suffering, in particular for women and children. She paid a tribute to those UNICEF staff members who had died while performing their duties in the service of suffering children.

76. She agreed with the Executive Director regarding the need to incorporate into Agenda 21 the goals set out during the World Summit for Children and was encouraged to see that concrete steps were being taken by many Governments in that regard. For its part, the Philippines had recently signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, and had become the thirty-first country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

77. The restoration of democratic institutions and the social and economic reforms in her country had established a favourable climate for progress in ensuring the survival, protection and development of children. Policies directed towards that goal were being implemented within the framework of the country's medium-term development plan for the period 1993-1998.

78. In response to the Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Children, her Government had adopted a plan of action which established specific goals and targets for promoting the well-being of children in five key areas: family care and alternative parental arrangements; basic health, nutrition and social security; safe environment; basic education, leisure, recreation and cultural activities for children; and fundamental civil rights. The current leadership of the country had demonstrated a strong commitment to the implementation of the plan, and had directed all relevant Government agencies to share in the effort. In addition, the President had recently signed an agreement with local NGOs specifically outlining the roles of private sector and grass-roots organizations in national development efforts.

79. The partnership between the Philippines and UNICEF had yielded important results in a number of areas over the years. For example, in cooperation with UNICEF, the Universal Child Immunization Programme had provided coverage for 80 per cent of the children targeted in 1989. A series of national immunization days in 1993, 1994 and 1995 had been declared and over 5 million volunteers and government health workers would be enlisted to participate. Much of the volunteers' training would be provided by UNICEF.

80. Another component of the plan of action for children was the promotion of breast-feeding as a way to combat infant malnutrition. Through programmes like the "baby-friendly" hospital initiative, which was sponsored by UNICEF, definite progress was being made in that regard.

(Mrs. Escaler, Observer, Philippines)

81. With respect to the UNICEF country programme for the Philippines for the period 1994 to 1998, she said that greater cooperation with UNICEF would help to provide broader resource mobilization, expanded service coverage, capacity-building for local governments, and community empowerment. The $60 million recommended for the fourth country programme for the Philippines was just a small fraction of the UNICEF country programmes budget, but it would be of great help to her country as it implemented its own national plan of action.

82. The Philippines was making the most of the debt conversions for child development arrangements to compensate for shortfalls caused by severe fiscal constraints. Two agreements in that area had been successfully concluded with the Netherlands Government and a third was being negotiated to benefit a joint programme with UNICEF for primary education. Such arrangements had the potential to become a significant source of supplementary funds for the implementation of other programmes under the national plan of action for children.

83. She welcomed the Fund's response to General Assembly resolution 47/199. Her country accorded high priority to the formulation of national strategies and national implementation of development programmes.

84. With respect to the question of the possible transfer of UNICEF headquarters, her delegation would welcome any solution that was both cost-effective and functional.

85. While the Philippines welcomed and supported the restructuring of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors, she hoped that the reforms would not adversely affect the operational programmes of UNICEF but, rather, provide an impetus for the more vigorous and effective pursuit of its goals.

86. Ms. MAIR (Jamaica) said that the session of the Executive Board was taking place at a time of rising expectations and expanding responsibilities for the United Nations and UNICEF. The human displacement, suffering and insecurity which provided the context for the Fund's work around the world were increasing, and women and children were the main victims, in the case of both the "loud" emergencies of intra-national or regional conflicts and the "silent" emergencies of malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. Furthermore, the needs were escalating at a time when aid budgets were declining.

87. Despite the bleak situation, Jamaica shared the Executive Director's optimism and was prepared to do its part in addressing problems affecting children. In that connection, she noted that her country had participated in the World Summit for Children and was in the process of drafting its national programme of action. Moreover, it was taking steps to integrate the identified goals and strategies into its national development plans and programmes.

88. At a time of fiscal constraints and foreign indebtedness, Jamaica attached great importance to collaboration with UNICEF in programmes for the development of women and children. UNICEF had performed a valuable service by softening the human impact of structural adjustment through its Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC). It had also played a critical

(Ms. Mair, Jamaica)

role in programmes for the promotion of breast-feeding, the control of AIDS among adolescents, and the reintegration of street children into society.

89. Expressions of concern about the problems of children needed to be accompanied by resolute action and a commitment of resources. The Secretary-General had acknowledged the crucial importance of those issues in his report "An Agenda for Peace", in which he underscored the interrelationship between development and international security. In that context, the specific questions relating to the administration and financing of UNICEF - important questions concerning coordination, accountability and capacity-building - took on new significance.

90. Mr. HAJNOCZI (Observer for Austria) said that the new era ushered in by the end of the cold war had not brought about an end to the suffering of millions of children throughout the world. Heartbreaking images of suffering in the media reminded the world that children were the first victims of aggression, ignorance and greed. At a time when political opportunities to address the problems of children were being missed, UNICEF had an important role to play.

91. Long-term strategies to provide children with access to clean water, health care, housing and primary education complemented efforts to reduce the suffering caused by displacement as a result of war, abandonment, or the death of parents. In that regard, the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children reflected a change in the traditional role of UNICEF in developing countries; through its advocacy role, UNICEF would bring the struggle for the rights of children to the conscience of the industrialized societies, thereby stimulating efforts to address issues relating to children.

92. The occasion of Austria's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had provided an opportunity for a vigorous discussion of the relevance of existing national legislation to children's rights and the need for reforms. In that connection, he drew attention to proposed legislation against child pornography, as well as new measures for the protection of refugee and minority children, orphans, and disabled children.

93. He welcomed the emphasis in the multi-donor evaluation report on UNICEF functions in the areas of capacity-building, sustainable assistance, advocacy, and empowerment. He also noted the rapidly increasing role of UNICEF in emergency assistance, which placed UNICEF field personnel in increasingly dangerous situations. In that connection, he paid a tribute to the UNICEF staff members who had died during missions in troubled areas of the world such as the former Yugoslavia.

94. His delegation attached great importance to the improvement of coordination among the various United Nations agencies involved in providing emergency humanitarian assistance under the leadership of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs. All agencies which had an operational role in emergencies should contribute actively to the strengthening of coordination instruments established under General Assembly resolution 46/182, including inter-agency needs-assessment missions, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, the Inter-Agency

(Mr. Hajnoczi, Observer, Austria)

Standing Committee, and consolidated appeals. Coordination of field efforts and greater sharing of information were also important in that regard. The proposal to increase UNICEF's emergency programme fund should also be considered in the wider context of improving coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance efforts.

95. In addition to its activities in the area of "loud" emergencies, UNICEF continued to play a role in addressing the "silent" emergencies which tended to affect larger numbers of people. In that connection, it was important for UNICEF to ensure a smooth transition from emergency assistance to long-term development support. The forthcoming meeting of the Economic and Social Council would provide an occasion to examine ways and means of improving the continuum of services from relief to rehabilitation and development, in accordance with resolution 46/182.

96. Reforms in the area of the governance of operational activities still had to be implemented and his delegation hoped that the package negotiated under the chairmanship of the Chairman of the Second Committee would soon be adopted. Those measures would enhance the overall effectiveness of the operational activities of the United Nations system and would increase the credibility of all the organizations concerned, including UNICEF.

97. Finally, he drew attention to the role of the Austrian National Committee for UNICEF in raising funds in the private sector. The National Committee had raised $2.4 million in 1992, in addition to the Austrian Government's contribution of $1.9 million to the UNICEF General Fund and $2.7 million for supplementary funds and emergencies.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

1993 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 28 April 1993, at 6.15 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. WARD (Canada)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. ROMULUS (Observer for Haiti) commended UNICEF for its humanitarian activities throughout the world, and for its valuable assistance to millions of mothers and children. The international community must pay attention to the hopes and fears of the children of the world, who in many places were growing up in the midst of warfare and atrocities, as evidenced by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other children lived in extreme poverty as was the case in Haiti, a situation of great concern to her President. The coup d'état which had overthrown the democratically elected Government of Haiti had led to mass displacements and the sprouting of shanty towns, with large numbers of orphans and semi-delinquent children.

2. The fundamental challenge of the time was to reduce infant and maternal mortality, chronic malnutrition and illiteracy, and to ensure access to drinking water and medical facilities. That challenge must be met by Governments, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. UNICEF in particular was concentrating on that endeavour. Yet UNICEF's initiatives were not enough; health and development were inextricably linked, and the time when health concerns were sacrificed to economic imperatives was over.

3. She welcomed the increased confidence in the ability of the United Nations to tackle the problems of the twenty-first century, including the consolidation of peace and democracy, the protection of the environment, drug control, delinquency, and the unending quest for children's rights, including providing children with the necessities of life.

4. There was no alternative but to meet those challenges, on the basis of increased awareness of a common destiny and international solidarity in interdependence. There was an urgent need to apply specific plans of action, both nationally and internationally. In Haiti, the refusal of the dictatorship to cede to democracy had created even more urgent needs.

5. The world's beliefs would be put to the test, and it would be necessary to find the most effective means of translating into practice the principles and values enunciated in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. New approaches were needed and all must work together and mobilize the United Nations system to meet the challenges of the new century.

6. Mrs. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Observer for Kazakhstan) said that, as indicated in panel 16 of the report "The state of the world's children 1993", the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries had experienced serious difficulties in virtually all spheres of socio-political life as a result of the transition to a market economy. The first constitution of independent Kazakhstan, adopted in January 1993, incorporated the human rights standards embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and laid the basis for the social, economic and legal protection of children and mothers, health care, and the care of orphans and neglected children. In October 1992, the President

(Mrs. Arystanbekova, Observer, Kazakhstan)

of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nazarbaev, had signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, thereby confirming Kazakhstan's desire to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children by the end of the century.

7. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had stressed that the right to a healthy environment was a basic human right. Unfortunately, that right was not afforded to the population in a number of regions of Kazakhstan. In particular the Aral Sea region, once rich with flora and fauna, had become a desert, leading to a sharp deterioration in the health of the population over a vast area. There was also an unsatisfactory situation in the area of the former nuclear test range near Semipalatinsk, in which for almost 40 years surface and underground nuclear tests had been conducted, affecting more than half a million a people. In those regions of Kazakhstan there was a high rate of infant mortality and child malnutrition, and poor maternal health. The President and Government of the Republic had declared those regions to be ecological crisis areas and, were making strenuous efforts to rebuild the environment and treat the affected population. Because of the scale of the damage, however, emergency assistance was needed from the international community, especially in view of the economic difficulties Kazakhstan was encountering in the transition to a market economy.

8. Her Government greatly appreciated the cooperation of UNICEF; the latter's missions to Kazakhstan had formulated specific recommendations on the provision of immediate assistance to the Republic and the allocation of material resources for health needs. Kazakhstan had gratefully received 16 tons of desperately needed children's medicines. During the winter UNICEF, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and the "Bobek" children's fund of the Republic, had formulated and successfully implemented a programme to combat acute respiratory infections, which had produced a significant improvement in child health. UNICEF experts participating in the programme had actively used the mass media to inform the population about the work of the UNICEF mission in Kazakhstan and to make practical recommendations on the prevention of childhood catarrhal infections.

9. The UNICEF country programme for Kazakhstan, in document E/ICEF/1993/P/L.24, correctly identified priorities in the development of health care and the strengthening of its material and technical basis. The two-year programme for Kazakhstan, with its clear goal of mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the transitional period for the most vulnerable group - children and women - was timely and specific, and her Government therefore hoped that it would be approved by the Executive Board.

10. Mr. PASHOVSKI (Bulgaria) said that the current session was of particular importance for UNICEF's activities, given the profound changes in the world and the tremendous challenges facing the international community, one of the most significant of which was that of securing a better future for children. Given the transitional difficulties being experienced by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as a result of the move towards democracy, and the dramatic situation in some of those societies, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, his delegation attached particular importance to the functions of the unit for Central and Eastern Europe. The unit must continue to react promptly in order to protect children in endangered zones within that region. Of course, his

(Mr. Pashovski, Bulgaria)

delegation did not underestimate the suffering of children in other parts of the world, and would back any initiative aimed at relieving it.

11. Approval of the biennial budget was one of the important tasks before the Board, in which connection his delegation agreed that more transparency was needed in terms of budget planning and operations. Those issues should be thoroughly addressed in the Committee on Administration and Finance. Likewise, emergency funding must be strengthened. He noted with satisfaction the country programme recommendations for the former Soviet Republics in Asian and for Albania, and welcomed the recent UNICEF initiatives to promote inter-agency coordination in executing strategies in the field.

12. The problems of Central and Eastern Europe and the difficulties attending reform had resulted in a decline in the standard of living of large sectors of the population, especially children. Unemployment had led to worsening dietary, health and education standards and had contributed to a demographic crisis. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Children, his Government was preparing a national programme of action, linked with implementation in Bulgaria of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

13. The complex interactions of ethnic groups in the Balkans showed that bringing up children in a spirit of tolerance and peace was of primary concern. Special attention must be given to children belonging to minority groups experiencing the most severe consequences of the crisis. In Bulgaria, new approaches to minority groups were already being adopted.

14. His delegation was confident that UNICEF would continue to meet the challenges of a world that was undergoing a profound transformation, and his Government would continue to assist actively in achieving its worthy goals.

15. Mr. TRAORE (Observer for Mali) said that the Bamako Initiative had been launched at a time when Mali was restructuring its economy with the private sector becoming involved in all fields, including the health sector. It had soon became clear, however, that that approach worked only in urban centres, with a relatively affluent population, while the public sector continued to lack resources. A new, community-based approach under the Bamako Initiative had been particularly effective with regard to primary health care, with population groups taking responsibility for their own health. A number of community health care centres had been established as a result, and the Government had taken measures to ensure the availability of essential medical supplies.

16. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Children, Mali had formulated a national action plan for the survival, development and protection of the child. Intersectoral working groups had been set up to identify priority needs, with emphasis on reducing infant and maternal mortality, developing education, above all for girls, and establishing an institutional and statutory framework in consonance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

17. Cooperation between Mali and UNICEF had resulted in a significant improvement in maternal and child health through improved immunization coverage and better access to drinking water. Nevertheless infant mortality remained high, and malnutrition was widespread. Over 40 per cent of the population lived more than 15 kilometres from a health centre. AIDS was spreading rapidly, and

(Mr. Traore, Observer, Mali)

school enrolment was low, particularly for girls. In such a context UNICEF action must be increased. His delegation was pleased that the programme of cooperation for Mali would be considered at the current session.

18. If Africa was to continue to benefit from UNICEF assistance, the agency's identity, flexibility and ability to respond quickly and effectively must be maintained. He trusted that UNICEF resources would increase so that it could play a still more effective role on behalf of the children of the world.

19. Mr. DORIA MEDINA (Observer for Bolivia) said it was recognized that most of the poor were children, and that most children were poor. The eradication of poverty was an overriding priority, and his delegation was confident that the economic and social functions of the Organization would be strengthened as a result of the current restructuring.

20. In recent years Bolivia had found solutions to a number of its economic difficulties, and the first results of a new policy of social investment, under which human capital was the strategic resource of the State, were now becoming apparent. In Bolivia there was now a clear view of how to combat poverty, with well-defined social objectives on behalf of the neediest sectors. To that end, social investment in health and education had been significantly increased, social institutions had been strengthened to optimize the use of resources allocated to social investment, and a great effort was being made to improve information gathering so as to target services more effectively.

21. Government spending on social investment had increased substantially in 1992 and 1993, and two new government agencies, the National Agency for Minors, Women and the Family and the Social Policy Analysis Unit, had been established in order to strengthen the institutional framework in the social sector. Further, a national census had been conducted in 1992, and social indicators had been prepared using the data gathered. The progress made was evidenced by the 50 per cent reduction in infant mortality since 1976. Equally, indicators demonstrated that various poverty related issues, including illiteracy, were being tackled, and immunization coverage was increasing. Nevertheless, fundamental differences in conditions between rural and urban areas persisted.

22. Bolivia would shortly hold an election, but it was certain that the market economy approach and the new emphasis on social policy would be maintained by any new administration. International assistance remained necessary, however. UNICEF assistance had been instrumental in Bolivia's progress against poverty. Bolivia's programme of cooperation with UNICEF over the next five years clearly reflected the national objectives of devoting greater resources to improving the living standards of the target groups through community-based social policy intervention.

23. Mr. TÜRK (Observer for Slovenia) said that preparations were under way for the establishment of a national committee for UNICEF in Slovenia, and a cooperation agreement with UNICEF would be signed in the near future. UNICEF greeting cards had been sold in Slovenia for over 20 years; in 1989 and 1990 sales had reached 2 million, more than one greeting card per inhabitant. That was just one of the ways his country showed its appreciation for the work of UNICEF. Its message had reached every home in Slovenia.

(Mr. Türk, Observer, Slovenia)

24. In the past year, UNICEF had become increasingly involved in emergency situations worldwide, placing new and greater demands on its resources. Slovenia had become the temporary home of some 70,000 refugees fleeing the brutal war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia. Forty-seven per cent of those refugees were children under 16 and 41 per cent were women. The citizens of Slovenia had tried their best to provide adequate facilities and to gather financial and material resources for their support. Along with food, shelter and medical services, the care of refugee children included a variety of educational programmes designed to implement one of the basic human rights - the right to education. Of course, only the voluntary return of refugees to their homes would provide a real solution. International aid, largely from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had been received, but the needs still vastly exceeded available resources. Increased international assistance was essential for the well-being of refugees in Slovenia, since its own resources were already stretched to the limit. Financial aid to support local purchase of supplies was the highest priority.

25. The meeting of the Executive Board was taking place at a time of positive change in public attitudes towards children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was among the first international treaties to which Slovenia had ratified its succession in 1991. The World Summit for Children had resulted in specific and realistic recommendations and goals, which his Government wholeheartedly supported and would incorporate into its policies.

26. As for the financial health of UNICEF, his delegation was concerned by the outlook for 1993. Sufficient financial resources were of paramount importance if UNICEF was to continue to expand its activities in pursuit of its objectives for the benefit of the world's children.

27. Mr. ZVEZDIN (Russian Federation) said that one of the main distinguishing features of UNICEF had always been its willingness to be in the forefront of the struggle to protect the interests of children, however difficult the circumstances. The new and sometimes unexpected challenges of recent years which had often painfully affected the situation of children, had repeatedly confirmed the relevance of the principles proclaimed in the final agreements of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the urgent need to implement them at all costs. UNICEF was making very commendable efforts to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, particularly in developing countries. UNICEF participation in international efforts to provide assistance to children and mothers in emergency situations was of increasing importance for many States in virtually all regions of the world; that participation should be increased through, inter alia, an enlargement of the Emergency Programme Fund. His delegation supported the concept of greater coordination between UNICEF and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which was a good example of an integrated approach in the area of operational activities in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/199. Among new UNICEF undertakings, the "Debt for Children Swap" was of great interest.

(Mr. Zvezdin, Russian Federation)

28. His Government was extremely grateful for the mobilization of humanitarian assistance to the Russian Federation and other CIS countries. The UNICEF and WHO missions to 14 countries of the former USSR in 1992 had formulated practical recommendations which had done much to bring about a better understanding by the international community of the special difficulties, of those countries, as demonstrated at the Tokyo Coordinating Conference on Humanitarian Assistance to the new independent States. The Governments of Canada, Switzerland and a number of other countries had provided invaluable assistance, particularly in the supply of vaccines and medicines for children. However, his Government did not intend to rely on external sources to solve the urgent problems of children and mothers; that approach would be irresponsible for a powerful country like his own which would soon be able to assist other countries, above all developing countries in "The State of the World's Children 1993".

29. His delegation shared the view in "The State of the World's Children 1993" that the goals for children could be implemented only through political commitments at the highest levels and with the widespread support of politicians, press and public. The transitional period in his country, and the decline in the population's standard of living, was particularly difficult for children and mothers. Because of budget reductions there was a decline in maternal and child State medical care; difficulties were therefore arising in the implementation of programmes for such care, school nutrition, the child nutrition industry and the production of medicines and vaccines. The rise of infant mortality was an urgent socio-economic problem. Such factors as the critical shortage of food, medicines and vaccines for children, the deterioration of the educational situation, the increasing number of neglected children and the rise in juvenile crime and drug addiction were exacerbating many negative trends; decisive action was needed to halt the deterioration of the situation of children and women and as far as possible neutralize the adverse consequences of the transitional period.

30. By a special decree of the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yeltsin, of 1 June 1992, the problems of the survival, protection and development of children had been recognized as a matter of priority at the federal and regional levels, particularly in establishing budgets, allocating material and financial resources, organizing and developing production and investing in socio-economic programmes. His Government had drawn up a federal programme "Children of Russia", similar to national programmes of action, laying down the main goals, principles and directions of State policy and also the means of implementation at the federal, territorial and local levels. Despite the Government's efforts, however, many problems of children linked to the deterioration of the economic and financial situation remained unsolved, and in a number of countries those problems were acute. In solving those problems his country would draw on its own resources, and on international experience and assistance.

31. His delegation welcomed the Executive Director's conclusions and recommendations regarding UNICEF activities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic countries and CIS, on the basis of resolution 1992/19, and attached importance to the work done by UNICEF, in conjunction with UNESCO, in assisting children and women who were victims of the Chernobyl disaster, in accordance with resolution 1992/20.

(Mr. Zverdin, Russian Federation)

32. On the question of headquarters office accommodation, his delegation supported the views and recommendations set forth in the Executive Director's report (E/ICEF/1993/AB/L.9) and in his oral statement.

33. His delegation paid tribute to the UNICEF staff who had died in the line of duty. Those losses highlighted the need to give serious consideration to the question of protecting UNICEF staff and the staff of other organs and organizations of the United Nations system.

34. Mr. RANASINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and as a follow-up had launched a national plan of action. Universal child immunization coverage had been achieved in 1989 and maintained since then. It was hoped that polio and neonatal tetanus would be completely eradicated from Sri Lanka by 1995.

35. Cooperation on the survival, development and protection of children in South Asia had been promoted by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Ministerial Meeting on Children held at Colombo in September 1992. The Colombo Resolution had committed the SAARC countries to strive to alleviate disparities in health, nutrition, education and social conditions, as well as to address the problem of young mothers and child labour. The SAARC countries had also pledged to raise the age of marriage of women to 18 years and eliminate gender discrimination among children. The SAARC Meeting had further promoted a degree of interaction between SAARC and UNICEF.

36. UNICEF was a household name in most developing countries. It should coordinate with other United Nations agencies to ensure more effective programme delivery and refrain from becoming involved in areas where other United Nations agencies were already present; it should maintain its good record of complementarity with other agencies.

37. His delegation had participated in the UNICEF field visits to Viet Nam and Nepal; such visits should be further encouraged. His delegation had also been a member of the Reference Group and was pleased that the format and presentation of the administrative and programme budget was appreciated; the current budget was being prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the Reference Group.

38. He paid tribute to the UNICEF staff members killed in the line of duty and urged the adoption of appropriate safety measures. On several occasions, his delegation had drawn attention to the need to pay adequate compensation to the families of victims.

39. UNICEF was increasingly being called upon to respond to emergency situations, and he thanked UNICEF for its quick response in the provision of medical supplies and other assistance to some parts of Sri Lanka affected by terrorist violence.

40. Lastly, he said that the unique identity of UNICEF as a neutral and impartial humanitarian and development agency should be maintained and remain unaffected by any structural changes in the United Nations system.

41. Mr. KLINK (Observer for the Holy See) said that the hallmark of UNICEF had been its focus on eliminating the basic dangers to children and mothers - disease and hunger - by providing basic education, adequate food, clean water, sanitation and primary health care. UNICEF was able to establish bonds between diverse nations, races and creeds through the achievement of consensus, which ensured the fullest participation of all. The recipient of the 1993 Maurice Pate Award, the state of Ceara, Brazil, provided a good example of the results of such a consensus. All of its institutions had worked together to promote the most basic right - the right to life - of the children of the area.

42. The Catholic Church was proud of its innumerable activities carried out every day in all parts of the world by dedicated people who shared in the Gospel's mandate to care for children. Its activities included schools, hospitals, orphanages and foundling homes, among many others. In addition, Catholic institutions and programmes provided food and shelter in situations caused by natural disasters or political upheaval.

43. A common characteristic of such programmes was their respect for the local culture and their emphasis on support to the family in order to make programmes for children more effective. In order to be successful and developmental in approach, the education of children must be inclusionary rather than exclusionary, aiming at the fullest participation of the entire family unit. Accordingly, education regarding healthy lifestyles should always be founded on basic moral principles. Education programmes relating to reproductive health should emphasize "responsible sexual behaviour" rather than the misleading term "safe sex".

44. Similarly, his delegation echoed the concern expressed by others that UNICEF must maintain its identity. Attempts to make UNICEF all things to all people, to so broaden its field of activity that its mandate became identical to that of any other development agency, might lead to a loss of popular support. To pre-empt scarce resources of ongoing essential programmes and redirect them to family planning programmes already mandated to other agencies was both contradictory and a duplication of effort.

45. The Holy See noted with satisfaction that the document entitled "UNICEF policy on family planning" (E/ICEF/1993/L.5) stated clearly that UNICEF had never provided support for abortion and it continued to be the long-standing UNICEF policy not to support abortion as a means of family planning, and that UNICEF did not provide contraceptive supplies from its resources. Much of the specific wording of the document, however, placed it directly at odds with the Catholic Church's moral teaching. Thus, great sensitivity would be needed in the course of the drafting sessions to protect the common interest in maintaining the proud tradition of consensus.

46. Mrs. ARUNGU-OLENDE (Observer for Kenya) said that humanitarian and technical assistance from UNICEF had helped to ensure the survival of many children. The generous support of donor countries and greater commitment to children's welfare on the part of Governments had also helped UNICEF in the performance of its mandate. UNICEF had succeeded in gaining broad acceptance by the people and Governments of many countries, and that valuable advantage must be maintained if it was to continue serving the needs of future generations.

(Mrs. Arungu-Olende, Observer, Kenya)

47. UNICEF assistance to ensure the survival of the African child had culminated in the International Conference on Assistance to African Children, which had provided countries of the region and their partners with an opportunity to assess the current situation of the children of Africa and to accelerate the preparation of national programmes. The responsibility for achieving goals and targets rested first and foremost on Governments, although the valuable assistance of the international community was recognized.

48. In Kenya, emergency conditions caused by civil strife in neighbouring countries, drought and famine had brought an influx of refugees, the majority of whom were children and women. Very difficult decisions had to be made and priorities reorganized based on the most urgent demands, resulting in the redirection of resources to emergency situations and away from national programmes. Her delegation called on UNICEF to continue to pay particular attention to trends in Africa so that emergency operations would remain distinct from regular field activities.

49. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/199, UNICEF should coordinate its activities with other United Nations agencies in the field, while maintaining its autonomy. Her delegation was pleased that UNICEF had a comparative advantage in the area of decentralization of its field activities. However, it should also ensure that beneficiaries had greater access to the decision-making process. Capacity-building and empowerment, especially of women, could not be successfully sustained unless the people to be empowered were given the opportunity to build their management skills and become decision makers.

50. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had given Governments and the international community new impetus to reappraise their laws and practices relating to children. Supervision of its implementation lay with Governments, but UNICEF could assist and encourage its implementation in order to promote the best interests and protection of the child.

51. Children's problems were reflections of deeper problems of families, and of women in particular. Her delegation believed that to empower the woman was to save the child.

52. Mr. KLAPH (NGO Committee on UNICEF) said that the NGO Committee's activities continued to be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit Plan of Action. He supported the call of the Executive Director for universal ratification of the Convention by 1995. In March, the NGO Committee had, jointly with UNICEF and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, held a Consultation on "The role of the United Nations and NGOs in the implementation of the Convention", attended by representatives of 11 United Nations agencies and 37 international NGOs. The Consultation had formulated recommendations for action by NGOs, Governments, donors, the United Nations system and the Committee on the Rights of the Child; those recommendations would be submitted to the World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna in June.

53. An NGO working group had written and begun distribution of a "Summary of international treaties to protect children in armed conflict".

(Mr. Klaph)

54. The NGO Committee would hold its third meeting of chief executive officers of major humanitarian and development organizations at Geneva in January 1994 on the theme "The contribution of youth to lasting peace".

55. NGOs in many countries had been helping to develop and implement national programmes of action following the World Summit for Children. Those developed by African Governments had been discussed at the recent International Conference on Assistance to African Children in Dakar, which had been attended by NGOs as full participants. There had thus been a renewed focus on Africa by a number of major NGOs. He was pleased that donors had committed themselves to increasing the percentage of official development assistance allocated to social development, and hoped that donors would act urgently on that commitment.

56. NGOs had worked closely with UNICEF staff at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the International Conference on Nutrition. He hoped that quantifiable goals with respect to children's needs would be reflected in the various national programmes of action.

57. He was pleased at the vigorous efforts to promote the education of girls and women, which was a key factor in social and economic development. The NGO Committee had formed a task force to collect information about programmes that actually increased the access of girls to education, in order to encourage NGOs to invest more of their resources in the reduction of gender disparity.

58. One month previously, the NGO Committee had held a consultation with national counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe, where NGOs were emerging in considerable numbers. The report on that consultation would be available in July 1993. The NGO Committee further had plans to hold a Regional Conference on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November in Central America.

59. Lastly, he was pleased with the increased level of collaboration in information and advocacy programmes that had resulted from strengthening of the secretariat in New York and Geneva.

60. Mr. SY (Organization of African Unity (OAU)) observed that 35,000 children under the age of 5 died daily in the developing countries. Some 60 per cent of those deaths and much of the world's illness and malnutrition were caused by just three preventable diseases: pneumonia, diarrhoea and measles. As a result of armed conflict in various regions and political and economic transformations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, increasing demands were being placed on UNICEF, and therefore its resources should be increased and its efficiency enhanced. He paid tribute to all UNICEF staff members killed in the line of duty. Regarding restructuring and revitalization, the delivery of social services, capacity-building and empowerment would require more evaluation in order to ensure greater effectiveness. With regard to financial issues, the relationships between the administrative and programme support budget and global funds budget should be examined and clearly defined; as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, an operational linkage should be established between the two budgets.

(Mr. Sy)

61. OAU had taken a leading role in promoting awareness of the needs of African children and had organized jointly with UNICEF the recent International Conference on Assistance to African Children. Over 45 African countries had now prepared national programmes of action and taken steps to channel more funds to the social sector. In order to achieve the goals of such programmes world wide during the current decade, UNICEF had calculated that $25 billion would be required annually, and that the developing countries would need to devote at least 20 per cent of budgetary expenditure to the social sector. Furthermore, 20 per cent of official development assistance would need to be allocated to human priority concerns. If the African countries were to devote sufficient funds to the social sector, there would have to be effective debt-relief measures, as well as more realistic prices for African commodity exports. The role of UNICEF was vital for the development of the social sector of developing countries. While the African countries had undertaken to allocate a substantial part of their budget to that sector, OAU would welcome meaningful cooperation on the part of the international community to strengthen their budgetary resources.

62. Mrs. FAJARDO (Observer for Cuba) said that the principle of a "first call for children" was of particular importance at a time when the world was confronting enormous problems which were putting the lives of children at risk. Cuba had consistently implemented that principle and had achieved significant results in child survival and overall development. Because of the international events that had been affecting Cuba's trade relations over the past five years its response capacities needed to be strengthened so as to maintain the levels of child welfare which had been achieved over many years of intense work. The national programme of action to achieve goals of the World Summit for Children, which had been assessed in November 1992 at the end of the first year of implementation, had been an important factor in achieving those objectives.

63. Cuba's favourable indicators of child mortality, literacy and school attendance demonstrated her Government's political will to make all the necessary efforts for the development and well-being of children, despite severe financial constraints. It was significant that such phenomena as the sale of children for adoption, child prostitution, child pornography, traffic in children and child labour did not exist in Cuba. UNICEF had to take up those serious problems, because of their wide repercussions.

64. An epidemic of an eye disease, optical neuritis, had recently developed in Cuba; isolated cases had first been detected towards the end of 1992 and over the past weeks the number of cases had significantly increased. Cuba was combating the epidemic with all available resources, relying on its strong health system and numerous health institutions.

65. Her delegation felt that some of the proposals for reform referred to in the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF (E/ICEF/1993/CRP.7), ran counter to the trend for greater democratization of the United Nations. As to UNICEF's intervention strategies, her delegation firmly believed that they should continue to emphasize its goals of promoting the interests of children in accordance with its specific mandate; in that respect, Governments continued to play a primary role.

66. Mr. NGUYEN MINH THONG (Observer for Viet Nam) said that UNICEF was to be commended for its efforts to assist Governments with their national plans of action following the World Summit for Children. Renewed and enhanced commitment would be needed on the part of both donor and recipient communities in order to achieve the Summit's goals. UNICEF had over the years proved its ability to deliver low-cost, high-impact initiatives and innovative intervention in a number of areas. He commended UNICEF for its active responses to the "loud" emergency situations which had arisen in various parts of the world, and for its efforts and activities with regard to children and sustainable development, the Bamako Initiative, the Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative, as well as fund raising and improved management. Regarding restructuring and revitalization, he urged close coordination among United Nations agencies, but stressed that under no circumstances should the unique comparative advantage of UNICEF be eroded.

67. In the 1970s and early 1980s, UNICEF had provided emergency relief assistance to Viet Nam, and had subsequently moved towards more permanent and well-planned country programmes of cooperation. As one of the first to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Viet Nam had taken all possible steps to translate the Convention into legislation to ensure the utmost care and protection for children and mothers. While Viet Nam had in recent years been engaged in a vigorous process of renovation and reform, UNICEF had provided Vietnamese children and mothers with valuable assistance, which had been an effective catalytic factor in forming a strong and widespread local and national alliance for children in Viet Nam. He expressed his delegation's thanks and appreciation for the effective assistance of UNICEF and its dedicated staff. Lastly, he urged donor countries to increase substantially their contributions to UNICEF.

The meeting rose at 8.40 p.m.